

*Becomes an original co-sponsor of the Safe Climate Act, authors new legislation*

Washington, DC -- Rep. Peter Welch today announced an initiative that will make his congressional offices in Vermont and Washington carbon neutral.

By providing financial support for two Vermont renewable energy projects, Welch will offset the greenhouse gas emissions related to his office activities so they will not contribute to global warming.

Welch also announced he will be an original co-sponsor of Rep. Henry Waxman's Safe Climate Act, which calls for an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and boosts automobile mileage standards.

"The crisis of global warming is real, it is urgent, and it requires our immediate action," said Welch. "By embracing the challenge of global warming we can open the door to innovative local approaches as we work toward solutions."

Prohibited by current law from using federal funds allotted for office operations, Welch will use personal funds to pay the \$672 cost for the carbon offsets to NativeEnergy of Charlotte, VT, a world leader in carbon offset providers. Welch will introduce legislation today that will authorize Congressional offices and other federal agencies to account for their environmental impact through such offset programs.

"As I serve Vermonters and work to aggressively address global warming, I wanted to account for the carbon pollution created by my own office," added Welch. "If my office budget can be used for activities that pollute, I believe those same resources should be available for offsetting that pollution."

The carbon neutral initiative will account for the fuel and electricity-related emissions created by Welch's two offices, regular roundtrip air travel from Vermont to Washington, and for car travel throughout the state by Welch and his staff. According to NativeEnergy calculations, these activities will produce an estimated 56 short tons of carbon pollution over the year.

The offsets allow Welch to account for the greenhouse gas emissions related to his office's activities and will bring needed support to two new renewable energy projects planned in Vermont.

The projects slated to be built with the help of Welch's offset contribution are a methane digester project on a Westminster dairy farm and a biomass pellet-fired boiler that will replace a fossil fuel-fired boiler at Vermont Technical College in Randolph.

"We are thrilled about the leadership Congressman Welch is providing and look forward to his help in developing these new renewable projects that benefit Vermonters and reduce carbon emissions," said Tom Boucher, President of NativeEnergy.

In addition to the partnership with NativeEnergy, Vermont Technical College, and the Westminster dairy farm for the offsets, Welch's office is working with Burlington Electric Department and Efficiency Vermont to help reduce his office's overall energy use and its resulting "carbon footprint."

Bill McKibben, of Ripton and author of *The End of Nature* said, "Peter Welch deserves great credit for putting his office in order energy-wise and for working to point the House and the nation in the right direction too. He offers the personal and the political action we so badly need - and along the way he is supporting the local economies that may someday provide the real exit from our current dilemma."

Other partners with NativeEnergy include Ben and Jerry's, the Dave Mathew's Band, Seventh Generation, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Stonyfield Farm, and the Middlebury College Snow Bowl.